

Jesus Christ and The Philadelphia Transit Case

Mark 11: 11 - 19. And he entered into the temple; and when he

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had looked round about upon all things, it being now even-
tide, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany,
he hungered. (13 & 14 omitted)

And they came to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple,
and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought
in the temple, and overthrew threw the tables of the money-
changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he
would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through
the temple. And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not
written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all
the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers. And the
chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought how they
might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multi-
tude was astonished at his teaching.

I hesitated a great deal when I was trying to decide
what my sermon this morning would be about. When there are so
many things weighing heavily on your mind, and you are going to
be in front of the same audience only once, or twice, it is very
difficult to eliminate. When you have to come to grips with life,
life as it ~~is~~ involves every one of us in our struggles, when you
wrestle with the problems of many other individuals and help
them solve their problems and remedy their condition, it is very
hard to come to Church on Sunday morning and think only of the
many beauties of Heaven, it is very hard to come to Church on
Sunday morning and think of, say, a very beautiful Sunday School

wrong and injustice, and that person is able to worship at all
this morning, that person's worship will be one of repentance.
If someone among us this morning has had a great happiness, that
person - if his heart is big enough for God too - that person's
worship this morning will be marked by Thanksgiving. ~~AMEN~~
II On the other hand, most of us this morning

Prayer

Eternal Love, enter into our being and possess us; manifest Thyself to us as our Father and Redeemer. Show us that Thou hast need of our little lives to fulfill Thy purpose of righteousness, even as we need Thee to realize the fullness of life. Make our fairest vision of mercy and truth, of love and justice, so real, so commanding, that all that is within us shall rise up and follow it. Endue us with power, with the insight to read Thy word in the facts and events of our day, and the courage to obey it, following even where we cannot see the way.

Teach us, Oh God, to obey the all-embracing law of universal love as exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. Help us through daily meditation and prayer to search our hearts, face our problems, with courage, ~~eliminate our earthly desires~~, and be lifted from consciousness of self to consciousness of Thee. At all times make us aware, in the silence of our souls, of Thy absolute presence, which, speaking the word of deepest wisdom, will sustain and guide us, and if we be worthy, pass through us as an energizing and ennobling influence to ~~our~~ ^{our} fellowmen.

Creative Spirit, who hast through the ages been bringing harmony out of chaos and confusion, make us ready we pray, for the great adventure of living in a growing, changing world. Preserve us from accepting the low goals and cheap compromises of life. We ask not for immunity from risks, but for the courage to meet them with imagination and intelligence; and grant unto us such modesty of spirit that we may constantly feel the need of renewing our purposes in the light of Thy vision. So shall we become co-workers with Thee.

Grace Congl - Harlem
Aug 13, 1944

1944

Jesus - And Social Action

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this morning would be about. When there are so many things weighing
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audience only once, or twice, it is very difficult to eliminate. When
you have to come to grips with life, life as it involves every one of
us in our struggles, when you wrestle with the problems of many other
individuals and help them solve their problems and remedy their conditions,
it is very hard to come to church on Sunday morning and think only of the
many beauties of Heaven; it is very hard to come to church on Sunday
morning and think of, say, a very beautiful Sunday School lesson with-
out a troubled heart about the difference between the historic feeding
of the five thousand by Jesus in a beautiful garden and the present
fact of the hours of labor we put in in order to be able to pursue
the non-beautiful process of buying groceries, cooking food in the heat,
serving it, and then cleaning up.

Even on Sunday then, even as we sit here in church, we have in our
subconscious minds, the deposits of events during the past days. And
as we are here, our ability to worship, is greatly influenced by how we

have fared during the past few days. If one of us here has had a great sorrow in the past few days, that person's worship this morning is a mournful one. If one of us here committed a great wrong and injustice, that person's worship will be one of repentance. If someone among us this morning has had a great happiness, that person - if his heart is big enough to come to church too - that person's worship this morning will be marked by Thanksgiving. On the other hand, most of us this morning have had no great event or upheaval to mark the course of our life during this past week. The worship of those this morning will be more completely dependent on what inspiration they receive here, from the Church building, the others present, the music of the congregation, the Choirs music, or from the person filling this pulpit today.

As Rev. Evans said last Sunday by way of introduction of the person filling the pulpit this morning, I was a Congregational Minister before I became a Social Worker. As a Minister, I saw the great need for social action all around us. Church members cannot go to church on Sunday divested of all the problems that beset them during the week. The problems sometimes become so great, that Church members can't even get to Church. Someone has to do something about those problems. Someone has to get out and come to grips with the problems at their roots. The Church does preach Social Action - the life of Jesus exemplifies Social Action.

The picture of Jesus cleansing the temple is the outstanding one that we have of Jesus taking direct action about a social evil. There was a social and religious evil in the temple that Jesus went into action against. The temple was the center of the life of the Jews. The religious custom required that they make an annual pilgrimage to the temple and present a proper sacrifice. The priest required

that the sacrifice be without a blemish. The law required that the sacrifice be a dove, sheep, or goat. When poor Jews would have saved their very special animal during the year, for the pilgrimage, they would usually find on arrival at the temple that the priest would not accept their animal for sacrifice. The priest would say it was not perfect, and require that a so-called perfect animal be bought. And so, the poor person would have to buy an animal from one of the sellers in the temple. The money that was used in the persons local town was not acceptable by the sellers, and so the poor person would have to go to the money-changer in the temple, who would exchange the local money for temple money - at a huge profit to the moneychanger. Therefore as much money as the person had was usually taken from him in the temple. This had become a disgraceful "racket".

Let us look at the text again: And he entered into the temple; and when he had looked round upon all things, it being now eventide, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve."

We note that Jesus went one afternoon into the temple and merely looked at what was going on. We may be sure that what he saw grieved him. It is interesting to me that he waited until the next day before he went into action. It was a serious an important action to take. Something had to be done. I feel that Jesus had to think through his course of action. And I like that fact. It shows, as other instances do also, that Jesus was not an impetuous man, apt to do or say something about an important issue without first thinking and meditating on what would be best to do. In this case, it was best that the traders be driven out of the temple, and Jesus did it.!

And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered. (13 & 14 omitted) And they came to Jerusalem: and he entered the temple, and began to cast them out that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers,

and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? - but ye have made it a den of robbers.

We have our dens of robbers, graft, and of vested interests today! ^{Pause} Don't we? There is one vested interest that has held my attention - a great deal of my attention - for the past few days. It is the Philadelphia Transit Company. So concerned have I been about the implications of the case occasioned by the strike, I can't refrain from discussing it with respect to the text for this morning.

Let us review the facts so we may have them clearly in mind: The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices made an investigation of the Philadelphia Transit Company and established the fact that the Company discriminates against Negroes in hiring and upgrading. There was a company union as the official bargaining agent, up to about a year ago, two presidents of which had been Messers Carney and McMenamin. This company Union had lost its recognition when the C.I.O. Union caused an election to be held and was voted to be the official bargaining agency for the 6,000 workers. The Fair Employment Practices Committee, in cooperation with the War Manpower Commission set in motion the means of erasing the discriminatory policies of the Philadelphia Transit Company. An order was issued to the effect that the P. T. C. should cease and desist from discriminatory hiring and that it should upgrade Negroes. Three Negroes had been referred to the Company for jobs as Operators, and had not been hired. Five other Negroes were to be upgraded to jobs as Operators. The Philadelphia Transit Company did not want these Negroes employed as Operators. And so, there occurred a peculiar relationship between the company and Carney and McMenamin - the past Union presidents I mentioned. These two men began to stir up racial hatreds among the employees of the company, on company property, on company time of the other employees.

A strike was fomented. It certainly apperas that the company knew in advance of the plans to strike, but as far as is known outside of the Management of P. T. C., the company made no efforts to head off the strike.

That much was in the newspapers. However, this is one the newspapers missed: On the second day of the strike, my telephone rang and I found myself talking with a high government official, who during our discussion of what I was doing in the case as Industrial Secretary of the New Jersey Urban League, said that not two hours before he called me, the Philadelphia Transit Company had tried to forde Mr. Frank L. McNamee, the Regional Director of the War Manpower Commission (in Philadelphia), to suspend the order to hire and upgrade the eight Negroes in question.. Now, a company as strong and powerful as is the Philadelphia Transit Company can bring a lot of Pressure to bear. Well, Frank L. McNamee refused to suspend the order. The company insisted that responsibility for the strike wouldd be at the feet of Mr. McNamee, etc. Mr McNamee stood firm.

The newspapers missed this too: According to mytelephone conversation - even before the company demanded the suspension of the order, the company had had printed 2,000 throw-away notices that the order was suspended, in other words that the employees would not have to worry anymore about the attempt to place Negroes as Operators, that the whole thing was called off. So sure were they that they would get the order suspended, they already had the notices printed, I am told on good authority. The company had a good surprise when they found the War Manpower Commission refused to back down.

I prefer not to discuss more of the details of the case. I believe the other aspects are extremely political and otherwise open to debate. The fact for our thinking now is that the Pressure of the P. T. C. did not cause the order to be suspended. The fact that the

ringleaders of the employees were not arrested until the strike had progressed for four days, is not offset by the fact that the Army showed its intention to break the strike by putting soldiers on every public service vehicle, by putting in motion machinery to draft occupationally deferred men into the Army and to keep others out of jobs for the duration.

As for the Army, Mr. McNamee requested that Negro as well as white troops be brought in. (Incidentally, this fact has not been reported by the Negro Press, at least as far as I have seen). this is significant - it shows foresight. A second Detraît did not occur either; not wholly because of this fact , but wouldn't you think it a contributing factor?

pause

Well, Jesus saw the need of cleansing out the temple. I beleive we have, in the Philadelphia case, one small instance of one step toward cleaning out another den! It wasn't Jesus, who made the step in the P.T.C. case. If it had been it would have been cleaned from top to bottom. The dust would have filled the air of every city in the country. No, this step was made by men who I believe have grown a little as Jesus has instructed that all of us must grow.

Careful now! I'm not saying that any man involved in the case of is Christ-like - but to the degree that certain men, under pressure, stood by what was right, ~~with think to that degree~~ we have an instance of right triumphant over wrong.

In this triumph there is Truth. And the Truth is what is important here. Right can triumph over Wrong even in such highly complex situations as the one in Philadelphia may be thought of as being.

My concern ~~this morning~~ is to provide the opportunity for clear and real understanding to be deposited in your conscious, so when you leave this place and go about your work of the week, there will be in your subconscious minds some Truth that will, without even

realizing it, help you make better decisions.

Folks, you know, if we could place in our subconscious minds only Truth, and Truth about all the important aspects of our life, we would be the most fortunate people on earth. The Gospel writer, John, quotes Jesus as saying, Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. If we have the truth, we will be free to make decisions without fear of being wrong. We will not be hemmed in by Lies, Untruths, Half-truths, and by Stupidity. The Truth is difficult to know, though. To get at it, we must think in terms of our highest Good, the Summum Bonnum, in other words - God. We need to place our thoughts with God as revealed through Jesus Christ, Not with the current customs and practices of some group of people, no matter how "high class" or how "low class" the group may be.

If the Kingdom of God is ever going to come on earth, we have got to bring it here. We must know what the Kingdom Of God on earth will be like before we can bring it too. We must dig back into our subconscious minds for everything we know that should be a part of the Kingdom on earth. We must become conscious of what we know to be Right. Furthermore, we must govern our actions by that knowledge.

We must use our knowledge to get the truth of what the Kingdom of God is like
 You can't send a child to the store for something he has never seen or which no one else has ever seen. He will come home saying, "Mama, the ^{clerk} man says I'm crazy, and you must be too, 'cause there ain't no such thing as the "Kingdom of God" on the market. Besides, even if he did know about it, it would be hard to get on accounta the war and the shortage of help - and 'cause it'd be hard to get it would cost plenty, so you'd better wait until after the war!"

Friends, the Kingdom of God isn't something that is ready made, you can't buy it. We have to create it. It is what Jesus spent three years teaching about. He spent his short ministry - he died at 33 - in teaching, and by deed, trying to enable people of his day and those after them, to come to know what the Kingdom of God is like. *This morn-*
 ing we are concerned with things ^{that} ~~which~~ ^{like} you and I, may do to help create ~~it here on earth.~~ *The Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in Heaven.*

When Jesus cast the money changers out of the temple, he used direct action - not toward other men, but toward a social evil. It was an evil that poor people were being robbed, and right in the temple! He saw what he could do and he did it.

cause Do you see what you can do about even any one of the social evils today? Of all the social injustices which plague the consciences of us here today, which one do you now think of as one about which each one of you can do some little something right now? I can't answer the

question for any one of you. For each one the contribution would be different. Think, Think, Think! What social evil bothers you most? Race prejudice? Slums and bad housing? Class discrimination? Exploitation of workers - individuals and groups - ? Child labor? Racketeering and extortion - black market? What can you do about it?

Those eight Negroes in Philadelphia were probably very uncomfortable and felt unsafe, when all the strike leaders were using them as the cause of the trouble. These eight stood

Once to every man and nation
 Comes the moment to decide,
 In the strife of truth with falsehood,
 For the good or evil side;
 Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
 Offering each the bloom or blight,
 And the choice goes on forever
 Twixt that darkness and the light.

Though the cause of evil prosper,
 Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;
 Truth forever on the scaffold,
 Wrong forever on the throne,-
 Yet that scaffold sways the future,
 And, behind the dim unknown,
 Standeth God within the shadow
 Keeping watch above his own.

Then to side with truth is noble,
 When we share her wretched crust,
 Ere her cause bring fame and profit,
 And 'tis prosperous to be just;
 Then it is the brave man chooses,
 While the coward stands aside
 And the multitude make virtue
 Of the faith they had denied.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes;
 They were souls that stood alone,
 Stood serene, and down the future
 Saw the golden beam incline
 To the side of perfect justice,
 Mastered by their faith divine,
 By one man's plain truth to manhood
 And to God's supreme design.